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SUBJECT: ALUMINI GRANT BRINGS ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING TO NEW
AUDIENCES IN SOUTH SULAWESI

¶1. (U) Summary: ConGen Surabaya's PAO recently traveled to remote regions of South Sulawesi to attend English Teacher Training Workshops organized by a participant in the Secondary School Educators 2005 program. Ratna Haris from the Secondary Educators State Alumni Association is using a \$13,500 grant to conduct 11 teacher training workshops all around the island of Sulawesi, connecting with thousands of English teachers in many areas that would otherwise not be reached by USG programs. This project demonstrates how grants can have an important impact in distant yet critical areas of Indonesia.

Sulawesi's Remote Interior

¶2. (U) Toraja, a region in the north-central part of South Sulawesi Province, does not have an airport and is accessible only by a nine-hour automobile trip from the provincial capital of Makassar. The area sees a small number of tourists, due to its unique cultural practices involving funerals and interment on cliff sides, but there is little other industry besides agriculture and almost no opportunities for economic, cultural, or academic exchange. However, during English Teacher Training Workshops organized by Secondary School Educators Program participant Ratna Haris April 18-19, Surabaya PAO witnessed a genuine hunger for improvements in English language instruction. Hundreds of teachers joined the workshop in the town of Makale, and dozens more in neighboring Enrekang. The workshops organized by Ratna Haris serve as a very cost-effective model which demonstrates the potential of active State Alumni Organizations.

Bang for the Buck

¶3. (U) A high school English teacher in Makassar, Ratna participated in the Secondary School Educators Program in 2005. In 2007, she received a State Alumni Grant for \$13,500 to conduct English teacher workshops throughout Sulawesi. So far in FY 2008, Ratna has conducted seven teacher training workshops and plans at least four more. The average attendance at the workshops has been over 100, and some teachers have asked if they can hold similar smaller workshops in their far-flung villages. In addition to the training itself, participants receive a packet of English teaching strategies and techniques. Ratna also raises the profile of these events and improves the chances of lasting commitment by inviting local education and government officials to participate. Both workshops attended by the PAO featured prominent government spokesmen proclaiming their support for better English education in local classrooms.

¶4. (U) In isolated regions of Indonesia, native English speakers are a big draw. With this in mind, Ratna reached out to English Teaching Assistants (ETA), Fulbright English Language Fellows (ELF), and Regional English Language Officers (RELO) in addition to Consulate staff to speak at events. She told PAO that there was a noticeable difference in attendance at seminars that featured an American and those that did not. Following his presentation on U.S. Education, PAO got a sense of the interest people have in talking with Americans as he fielded many questions about school systems in the U.S., training support for American teachers, the No Child Left Behind Program, and dealing with children whose native language may not be English. The admiration these teachers had for the importance placed on education in America was readily apparent, as was their desire to improve English teaching in Indonesian classrooms. Ratna's workshops are a clear example of the impact of programs such as ETA, ELF, RELO, and Alumni Associations have in fostering mutual understanding between Indonesians and Americans in Indonesia's less well-known, far-flung regions.

MCCLELLAND